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THEOSOPHICAL MANUALS

IV

REINCARNATION

198

T397m

v.4

The Aryan Theosophical Press
Point Loma, California
1919



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THEOSOPHICAL MANUALS

IV

REINCARNATION

BY

A STUDENT

SECOND EDITION

The Aryan Theosophical Press
Point Loma, California
1910

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PREFACE

THE remarks under this head are intended to be introductory to each of the Manuals.

First, as to the spirit in which they are offered. These Manuals are not written in a controversial spirit, nor as an addition to the stock of theories awaiting public approval. The writers have no time to waste in arguing with people who do not wish to be convinced, or who ridicule everything which is new to their limited outlook. Their message is for those who desire to know—those who are seeking for something that will solve their doubts and remove their difficulties. For such, all that is needed is a clear exposition of the Theosophical teachings; for they will judge of the truth of a teaching by its power to answer the questions they ask. People realize, much more now than in the early days of the Theosophical Society, the value of Theosophy;

for the ever-increasing difficulties engendered by selfishness and materialism, by doubt and the multiplicity of theories, have created an urgent demand which it alone can satisfy.

Again, it is necessary to state clearly and emphatically the genuine teachings of Theosophy, as given by the Founder of the Theosophical Society, H. P. Blavatsky, and her successors, William Q. Judge and Katherine Tingley. For, as H. P. Blavatsky predicted, there are persons who have sought to pervert these teachings and turn them into a source of profit to themselves and their own selfish and ambitious schemes. The true teachings do not lend themselves to such purposes; their ideals are of the purest and most unselfish. Hence these persons have sought to promulgate under the name of Theosophy a perverted form of the teachings, from which Brotherliness and other pure motives are omitted, and which contains doctrines which H. P. Blavatsky showed to be maleficent and destructive. As these pseudo-Theosophists have gained a certain amount of notoriety by using the names of the Theosophical Society and its Leaders, it is necessary to warn the public against them

and their misrepresentations. Their teachings can easily be shown, by comparison, to be directly contrary to those of H. P. Blavatsky, whom they nevertheless profess to follow. Instead of having for their basis self-sacrifice, self-purification and the elevation of the human race, these teachings too often pander to ambition, vanity and curiosity. In many cases they are altogether ridiculous, and only calculated to make people laugh. Nevertheless, as these travesties have served to discredit the name of Theosophy and to keep earnest inquirers away from the truth, it is well that the public should know their nature and origin. They are the work of people who were at one time members of the Theosophical Society, but who did not find in it that food for their own personalities of which they were really in search. So they turned against their teachers in wounded pride and vanity, and started little societies of their own — with themselves at the head.

The writers of these Manuals have no personal grievance against any such calumniators. Inspired by a profound love of the sublime teachings of Theosophy, they have made it

their life-work to bring the benefits which they have thereby received within the reach of as many people as possible. And they feel that they will have the hearty sympathy and co-operation of the public in exposing folly and bringing the truth to light.

Theosophy strikes unfamiliar ground in modern civilization, because it does not come under any particular one of the familiar headings of Religion, Science, Philosophy, etc. into which our age has divided its speculative activities. It dates back to a period in the history of mankind when such distinctions did not exist, but there was one Gnosis or Knowledge embracing all. Religion and Science, as we have them today, are but imperfect growths springing from the remnants of that great ancient system, the Wisdom-Religion, which included all that we now know as religion and science, and much more. Hence Theosophy will not appeal to the same motives as religion and science. It will not offer any cheap and easy salvation or put a premium upon mental inactivity and spiritual selfishness. Neither can it accomodate itself to the rules laid down by various schools of modern thought as to

what constitutes proof and what does not. But it can and does appeal to the Reason. The truth of doctrines such as Theosophy maintains, can only be estimated by their ability to solve problems and by their harmony with other truths which we know to be true. But in addition to this we have the testimony of the ages, which has been too long neglected by modern scholarship, but which is now being revealed by archaeologists and scholars, as H. P. Blavatsky prophesied that it would in this century.

It may perhaps be as well also to remind those who would criticise, that the state of modern opinion is scarcely such as to warrant anybody in assuming the attitude of a judge. It would be quite proper for a Theosophist, instead of answering questions or attempting to give proofs, to demand that his questioners should first state their own case, and to be himself the questioner. The result would certainly show that Theosophy, to say the very least, stands on an equal footing with any other view, since there is no certain knowledge, no satisfying explanation, to be found anywhere.

Since the days when the wave of materialism swept over the world, obliterating the traces of the ancient Wisdom-Religion and replacing it by theological dogmatism our religions have had nothing to offer us in the way of a philosophical explanation of the laws of Being as revealed in Man and in Nature. Instead we have only had bare statements and dogmatic assertions. The higher nature of man is represented by such vague words as Spirit and Soul, which have little or no meaning for the majority. The laws of the universe are briefly summed up under the term "God," and all further consideration of them shut off. Then came a reaction against the dogmatism of religion, and man pinned his faith to knowledge gained by study and reflection, limiting his researches however to the outer world as presented by the senses, and fearing to trench upon the ground which dogmatic theology had rendered the field of so much contention. The result of this has been that neither in religions nor sciences, have we any teaching about the higher nature of man or the deeper mysteries of the universe. This is a field which is left entirely

unexplored, or is at best the subject of tentative and unguided conjectures.

Until, therefore, religious teachers have something definite, consistent, and satisfactory to offer, and until science can give us something better than mere confessions of nescience or impudent denials with regard to everything beyond its own domain, Theosophy can afford to assume the rôle of questioner rather than that of questioned, and does not *owe* anybody any explanations whatever. It is sufficient to state its tenets and let them vindicate themselves by their greater reasonableness; and any further explanation that may be offered is offered rather from goodwill than from any obligation.

Theosophy undertakes to explain that which other systems leave unexplained, and is, on its own special ground, without a competitor. It can issue a challenge to theology, science, and other modern systems, to surpass it in giving a rational explanation of the facts of life.

Again, there are some questions which it is beyond the reach of the human mind, in *its present stage of development*, to answer; and

it would scarcely be just to arraign Theosophy for not answering these.

Judgment should in all cases be preceded by careful study. There are always those who will impatiently rush to questions which a further study would have rendered unnecessary; and it is safe to say that the majority of "objections" raised to Theosophical teachings are such as could have been solved by the objector himself, had he been a genuine student. In the ordinary courses of education, scholars are required and are content, to accept provisionally many of the teacher's statements, in full confidence that further study will explain what in the beginning cannot be made clear. In the same spirit an earnest student of Theosophy will be wise enough to hold many of his difficulties in reserve, until, by further investigation, he has gained better acquaintance with his subject. In the case of those who are not willing to adopt these wise and patient methods of study, it may be reasonably questioned whether they are the more anxious to learn or to disprove.

Above all it is sought to make these Man-

uals such that they shall appeal to the heart and not *merely* to the head; that they shall be of practical service to the reader in the problems of his daily life, and not mere intellectual exercises. For there have been in past days books written by persons more distinguished for a certain grade of mental nimbleness than for heartfelt devotion to the cause of truth; and these have appealed only to those people who love intricate philosophical problems better than practical work. But as H. P. Blavatsky so frequently urged, the message of Theosophy is for suffering humanity; and the great Teachers, whose sole purpose is to bring to mankind the Light of Truth and the saving grace of real Brotherhood can have no interest in catering for the mental curiosity of merely a few well-to-do individuals. Even soulless men, said H. P. Blavatsky, can be brilliantly intellectual; but for those who are in earnest in their desire to reach the higher life intellectual fireworks alone will have little attraction. We intend, therefore, to keep the practical aspect of the teachings always to the front, and to show, as far as possible, that they are what

they claim to be — the gospel of a new hope and salvation for humanity.

These Booklets are not all the product of a single pen, but are written by different Students at the International Headquarters of the UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY at Point Loma, California. Each writer has contributed his own quota to the series.

For further explanations on Theosophy generally, the reader is referred to the Book List published elsewhere in this volume and to the other Manuals of this series, which treat of Theosophy and the various Theosophical teachings.

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INTRODUCTORY

WHEN an unfamiliar doctrine is presented to the world, one often hears the cry, Where are the proofs? It is not easy to guess what is meant by such a question, and one can only infer that it indicates a certain confusion of mind on the part of the questioner. It is probably the result of a habit which our minds have acquired in consequence of too much worship of the inductive method used, or claimed to be used, by modern science. But a great teaching concerned with the destinies of the human race may not be susceptible of the same kind of proof as a scientific theory. Nor again can it be proved like a problem in geometry.

Men do not usually in practice arrive at a conviction of the truth of a proposition either by inductive or deductive reasoning; they judge by its consistency, its ability to explain

facts, and its general air of being in harmony with other things which we know to be true. When a teaching is offered the question is not, How did you get it; by the inductive or the deductive method? — but, Is it true? Will it explain my problems? Is it in harmony with other things? And surely, the world is sick of theorizing and is only too ready to accept a teaching that will answer this test!

In this way the teaching of Reincarnation must be judged. It is, from the nature of the case, impossible to produce direct sensory evidence or testimony to the truth of such a doctrine; nor would a conviction resting upon such evidence alone be of much depth or value. We have not heard that the faith in immortality has benefited much by spiritualistic séances, or that the ideals of man have been elevated thereby; and the words of Jesus, "Neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," apply in this case.

The truth of Reincarnation must be judged by its reasonableness, its harmony with other things, and its ability to explain the facts of

life and to solve problems which no other theory can solve.

Further it is advisable to be warned against the impatience and hastiness of our mental habits in this superficial age; habits so incompatible with the care and patience required by a student of the deeper mysteries of life. Proof can never be given at the outset of a study; the pupil must be content to wait until he has faithfully followed the beginnings of the way, and trust that the conviction will come to him as he proceeds. Faith is necessary in all enterprises — not blind faith, but that faith which is the assurance of knowledge to come. It is this internal conviction of the truth of a doctrine that encourages us to proceed to that point where the conviction may become certainty.

Again, those who propound objections to Reincarnation usually overlook the fact that most of their objections apply with much greater force to the theories already held as to man's destiny. What "scientific" proof have we of the Christian doctrine of heaven

and hell? Could no objections be raised as to the justice, the reasonableness or the mercifulness of some of the beliefs professed in the religious world? What has science to offer in the way of a theory of man's destiny? Here are a few questions out of many which it would be well to have answered first, before proceeding further. It is usual in courts of justice to make the complainant first state his own case and prove the defendant's guilt, rather than to require the defendant to prove his own innocence; if the complainant has no case, judgment goes for the defendant by default. If this procedure should be adopted in the case of Reincarnation, it would certainly not be necessary for its advocates to plead anything in its defense. All they would have to do would be to request their assailants to state their own doctrines and to give satisfactory answers to any questions which might be proposed. What theory of the after-life is willing to come forward and stand such a test? So let it be understood that an explanation of the evidences

for Reincarnation is in reality a *concession* on the part of its advocates. They feel that while so many contradictory and unsatisfactory theories and so many doubts on the subject of the after-life exist in the world, they have a perfect right to present their theory without any explanation whatever and still stand on (at least) an equal footing with others.

Let those then, we would say, who purpose to call in question the truth of Reincarnation, first go carefully over the ground of existing theories, making quite sure what position they themselves intend to maintain in opposition to Reincarnation. Even if the result is inconclusive, it may very likely clear up the mind on some points that have hitherto been obscure.

Another point which should really be insisted on is that in a case like the present, judgment should be preceded by most careful study. In approaching a Theosophical teaching, one is called upon to take a serious view of things, and the usual hasty, slipshod methods of forming an opinion will not do. As

a rule we find people ready to discuss a new subject on the smallest possible acquaintance or on no acquaintance at all; the result being that endless time and breath are wasted in useless talk, the greater part of which would have been saved if the talkers had thought first and spoken afterwards. If we never criticised anything until we had made ourselves thoroughly familiar with it, how little argument we should indulge in! By far the greater part of the questions asked and objections raised by inquirers about Reincarnation are such as a little study would have solved. Hence the advocate of Reincarnation must needs for the most part confine himself to referring the inquirers to what has been written or to their own reflections. All teachers know how distressing it is to have pupils interrupt the lecture in order to ask questions which would be answered in due time without the asking. Such conduct evinces uncontrollable impatience and a lack of confidence in the teacher; who, as a matter of probability, knows better than the pupil what objections

are likely to occur. A modest questioner should realize that it is extremely improbable that he (unless a very wise man indeed) will think of any objection that has not also occurred to other minds. Hence he may expect to find that his questions have mostly been anticipated.

But such remarks as the above will be entirely superfluous in the case of the intelligent and well-balanced reader. For him it will be only necessary that the doctrine of Reincarnation be clearly set forth and the principal points in its favor indicated.

In treating of Reincarnation it will be necessary to presume some acquaintance on the reader's part with the teachings as to the Seven Principles of Man, the subject of a former Manual, and also with Theosophical teachings generally, especially those which tell of Evolution; and references to the other Manuals of this series will be made.

The Evolution of Man is but a part of the general scheme of cosmic evolution, and the teachings of Theosophy form such a consist-

ent whole that they are interwoven at every point and cannot be adequately treated one by one. For the same reason it is futile to attempt to judge of any one teaching, such as that of Reincarnation, by itself and apart from the other teachings. The doctrine of Reincarnation is possibly inconsistent with the *conventional* views put forward by modern religion, science and philosophy; hence it cannot be made to square with them, except in so far as they are true; and any failure to effect such a reconciliation should be set down to the discredit of conventional views — not to that of Reincarnation.

I

WHAT REINCARNATION IS

THE doctrine of Reincarnation teaches that the eternal Soul of man — that is, the real Man — lives many successive lives on this earth, occupying every time a human form, and continually progressing toward perfection. It must be carefully distinguished from a certain teaching which often goes by the name of *Metempsychosis* or *Transmigration* and which holds that men incarnate in animal forms; for certain persons hostile to Theosophy have attempted to make people believe that Theosophy teaches this latter doctrine.

There is a natural tendency to think that the doctrine of Reincarnation means that our personality — Mr. Smith or Mrs. Jones — appears again and again on earth; and from this idea arises the common objection that we have no memory of earlier lives. It must therefore

be remarked that in the Theosophical teachings a broad distinction is made between the "personality" and the "individuality." The personality is regarded as an illusion, in a sense like that in which a dream is an illusion. This illusion is due to the fact that in our present imperfect state of development we mistake the mere attributes of the Self for the Self itself. But our personality is a bundle of changing moods, ideas and sentiments, and is not permanent. There is however a permanent factor in it, and this permanent factor gives us the feeling of separate individual existence and an intuition that at bottom we are immortal and eternal. This feeling of individuality proceeds from the Ego, the real eternal Self within. We cannot define it, because, in attempting to do so, we must strip it of all that we recognize as characterizing a mortal man. We must analyse our interior consciousness down to the point where there seems to the brain-mind to be nothing left.

Thus the Self is eternal, while all the attributes with which it is invested during earth-

life are impermanent. Consequently that which survives throughout the incarnations is a part of our Being so recondite that we should not recognize it as ourself; for all that we call "ourself" disappears at death. We might compare the eternal Self and its successive vestures with a string of beads; or better, with an actor who plays many parts. Macbeth knows nothing about Hamlet, but Irving knows about both and about himself as well. We are like actors so engrossed with our parts that we have temporarily lost sight of our real off-the-stage identity.

It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that the purpose of life and its successive incarnations is that the Soul — the real man — may profit. To our present ideas this may perhaps seem as if the Soul were *somebody else*, and we had no interest in the matter; but the Soul is to be sought within, for it is our veritable *Self*, though it cannot manifest itself as such until we have purified and clarified our nature from all illusive and extraneous elements. The mystery of the relation between the im-

mortal Self and the personality is one that can only be solved by much study and experience. Our religions say nothing of it, but the Buddhistic philosophy (not necessarily any modern Buddhist sect) goes deeply into the metaphysics of the subject, and so do many other ancient philosophies. Some light may be gleaned from the Manual in this series dealing with the Seven Principles of Man.

The duration of the interval between two successive lives is a question upon which but little information has been given by the Theosophical Teachers. Obviously there are many things which it is either impossible or imprudent to disclose to the world at present. The length of the Devachanic period must depend on the nature of the experiences which the Ego has to pass through in that state; and it may be short or measured by centuries. (See Manual on *Kâmaloka and Devachan*.)

THE PURPOSE OF REINCARNATION

THE purpose of Reincarnation is that a perfect Man may be produced. We shall understand better if we consider the processes of Life and Evolution *as a whole*, and not as applied to the case of Man particularly. Life consists of a twofold process, of which modern science studies only one half; the processes of Involution and Evolution. Science studies only the *evolution* of forms or organisms upwards from the lower types to the higher. But obviously there can be no such evolution without the operation of a vital or spiritual force, which, descending *from above*, enters these forms and causes them to expand and develop. This latter process is called Involution. To take an analogy from physical science, — consider a piece of ice. It turns to water and then to gas, and the gas may be heated and made to glow with light. But there is no energy in the ice which will accomplish this change unaided. There needs to be an infusion of something which the scientists have

called "heat." In the same way nothing will evolve unless something enters it from a higher plane. Animals will remain animals; and savages, savages.

Applying this principle now to the case of Man, we see that his development requires the interaction of the same pair of forces. In order that his body, his mind and his character may develop and grow upwards, there must be a descent of an informing Spirit from above. And here our analogy from physics will help us again. When the ice is turned into water and the water into steam, in both cases heat disappears from its manifested form and becomes latent. The *raising* of matter from a lower state to a higher was accompanied by a *lowering* of the heat principle from a higher temperature to a lower. In the same way the immortal Spirit which informs Man *descends* and, by lowering itself, raises him. Herein is the *sacrifice* which the Christ makes for Man.

This leads immediately to the question,—
What is it that reincarnates?

WHAT IS IT THAT REINCARNATES?

CLEARLY the nature of Man must for this purpose be regarded as dual — a reincarnating entity, and entities in which the former incarnates, or which are produced by its incarnation. The incarnating entity is that immortal Spirit which is the cause of man's evolution, and the entities in which it incarnates are the successive personalities which arise from its contact with earth-life. The reincarnating entity is immortal, and is the real Man, for whose purposes the reincarnations are experienced; but the successive personalities are transitory and unreal.

We must not, however, expect to be able to define the truth about such a teaching in narrow and simple terms; for, like all questions concerning nature and life, it is complex and vast. We can only speak in approximate terms. A reference to the teachings as to the Seven Principles of Man (dealt with in another Manual) will be advisable. For the moment we may recall that the "Higher

Triad" is composed of the three principles Ātmâ, Buddhi, and Manas (more correctly the higher part of Manas). H. P. Blavatsky says that that which incarnates is the Manas joined to Buddhi and Ātmâ. It is

The spiritual thinking Ego, the permanent principle in man, or that which is the seat of Manas. It is not Ātmâ, or even Ātmâ-Buddhi, regarded as the dual monad, that is the individual or divine man; but Manas. For Ātmâ is the Universal All, and becomes the Higher Self of man only in conjunction with Buddhi, its vehicle, which links it to the individuality or divine man.

And again:

Manas . . . is the real Individuality, or the divine man. It is this Ego which, having originally incarnated in the senseless human form . . . made of that human form *a real man*. It is this Ego, this "Causal Body," which overshadows every personality into which Karma forces it to reincarnate. — *Key to Theosophy*, chap. viii.

And William Q. Judge says:

Manas, Buddhi and Ātmâ, who are the real man . . . are attracted back to earth for reincarnation. They are the immortal part of us; they, in fact, and no other, are we.

It will be convenient, for present purposes, to call the incarnating entity the Ego; also, in Theosophy, the term Individuality is often applied to the real man, in contradistinction to the term personality, which is applied to the transitory self of a single earth-life.

The above teaching implies that we are not aware of our real Life, but are living in a kind of dream or illusion, during which we become so wrapped up in our thoughts and imaginations that we acquire a sort of false personality, like a person in a nightmare. So the saying, *Vita est somnium*, is not so untrue after all. But the real Life is no dream; and it is of this Life that one speaks when he declares, "Life is Joy!" For verily Life, in its purity and reality, is synonymous with joy, and it is only when we stand in the shadow of our own personality that the glorious tide fails us and we are sad.

The error by which we mistake the mere accidents and attributes of the Self for the Self itself, is one that is explained in Eastern philosophies, but we shall scarcely find words in

our own unphilosophical language to expound it adequately.

We know, however, by experience, that the personality is constantly changing, even within the limits of a single life; and that however much the grouping of ideas and beliefs may vary, the sense of individuality persists throughout all and we still call it "ourself." The sense of individuality is the only thing that does not change; it is the center, and it arises from the Ego.

The personal ends and aims which we set before ourselves are continually thwarted — alas! is it not the theme of the disillusioned mortal from time immemorial? "The vanity of human wishes," and so on! But what is the reason? It is because those ends and aims are not the purposes of the Ego; they are the whims of the lower mind. Like a wayward child, or a pig driven to market, we blunder from side to side and chase butterflies or dawdle to browse, while the Master who holds the lines as constantly pulls us up with a jerk. We have to learn to find out what is the pur-

pose of the Ego—our own real purpose—and concur with it instead of thwarting it.

“God moves in a mysterious way” and “knows what is best for us in his inscrutable wisdom,” and so on. But he does not forbid us from trying to learn his wisdom so that it may be less inscrutable. And then this God is not an extraneous personality, but Man’s real Self. Ultimately it is our destiny to become identified with It, so that its will is our will and its knowledge our knowledge. This is the mystic union between the lower mind and its divine counterpart, the “finding of Christ.”

PROCESS OF REINCARNATION

IN speaking of Evolution (see Manual on the Seven Principles and in other Theosophical writings) it was said that *Ātmâ-Buddhi* is the eternal omnipresent seed of Life in every atom of the universe; but that while being the cause of all life, growth and evolution, It exists in all the lower kingdoms of nature in a latent or unmanifested state. It

gives rise to all the phenomena which chemist and physicist study in the mineral kingdom, and to the lower forms of instinct and intelligence which are manifested in the plant and animal kingdoms. It is only in Man that this latent spark reaches its fuller unfoldment; and that was brought about by the coming of the *Mânasaputras* or "Sons of Mind," progressed Beings from another plane, who had been through the stages of human evolution before (in a preceding *Manvantara*). These beings endowed Man with Manas, thus enabling him to have a link with Âtmâ-Buddhi, giving him immortality, and the divine knowledge, and the potentiality of all divine power. Previous to this ensoulment, Man was simply a highly developed human animal, without the knowledge of good and evil and the power of choice. This is what is symbolized in the Bible and other sacred allegories. Ever after this ensoulment the history of Man is one of gradual improvement, as the power of the Higher Self gradually makes itself felt and he grows in experience and self-control. But

the process is long and, like every other process in nature, it is divided into alternating periods. These alternations are the succession of life and death. At the death of the body, the Soul lays down for a time its work (just as we lay down our work during sleep), and enters into a condition or sphere of existence in which it lives its own appropriate life as a spiritual being—a state answering to our “Heaven.” After a period of rest in this state or *Devachan*, the hour strikes for the Ego to re-enter bodily life and a new incarnation begins. It is drawn back by the unsatisfied aspirations and unfulfilled duties and purposes of earth-life; and entering the sphere of generation is born again with the developing embryo. But the subject here borders upon the question of man’s state before and after death, so we must refer the reader to the Manuals on those subjects.

II

ARGUMENTS FOR REINCARNATION

IT must be borne in mind that a doctrine is to be accepted for its truth and not for its convenience; and therefore that these arguments are not put forward to induce people to adopt Reincarnation as a comfortable belief, but to confirm the truth of the doctrine by showing how it reconciles all contradictions, explains all difficulties, and harmonizes with those facts of life which experience compels us to accept as facts.

In the first place Reincarnation is the only doctrine which reconciles the conclusions which we are forced to draw from the facts of life with the notions which we are bound to entertain as to divine law, justice, and mercy. Under all other theories these two have been irreconcilable. It has been the strenuous life-work of countless thinkers to try to present some

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formula which shall achieve an acceptable adjustment between our spiritual intuitions and our scientific and theological ideas, and to preserve faith in God and religion amid the unsettling tendencies of an age of inquiry. But, to do this, they have always had to leave a large part of the problem unsolved otherwise than by the general formula, "God's inscrutable Will." For instance, how can we account for the inequality of man's opportunities and circumstances on entering this life? Current theology affords no other explanation than that this is the will of Providence; but, as we are enjoined to strive to know God's will and mind, it is certainly as much a duty as a necessity that we should understand more about this particular problem. Science can tell us no more about it, and merely uses, in place of the divine will, other phrases which amount to about as much as using ABC instead of XYZ in an equation. But Reincarnation shows us that birth is not the beginning of Life, but only a point in the middle; and that we take up our life where we laid it down. Hence each

man's circumstances are the outcome of his former living. Here we have at once a satisfactory explanation of a vexed problem; and a doctrine which can explain a problem that no other doctrine can explain must surely be worth further consideration. When we find that the same key unlocks many other doors as well, we shall have good reason for believing that it is the master-key. The subject of individual merit and recompense is treated more fully under its more particular heading, the doctrine of Kārma.

Take next the problem of what happens to a man after death. He leaves this life with all his work unfinished and a host of unsatisfied desires and unachieved purposes. What is to become of these? Is he, after such a fragmentary day's work, to disappear forever from the earth, where these things were begun and where alone they can be finished? Will any heaven, however blissful, afford him the opportunities for making good what he has left imperfect, for assimilating the lessons which life has taught him, for correcting mistakes, and

so on? We speak not now of the old hard-and-fast doctrine of heaven and hell, for it has been sufficiently derided and denounced by others. Its injustice, improbability and absurdity are too apparent to satisfy any thinking mind. We speak merely of the various hypotheses and modified doctrines which have taken its place. But these rest on no authority, and are so many attempts to reconcile established belief with probability. Here again the doctrine of Reincarnation shows us how man returns to continue the work he has left unfinished, to repair mistakes, to learn new lessons, to achieve new heights, to become a more perfect image of his Immortal Self. And, as shown elsewhere, no one may claim enough knowledge of God's nature and will to justify him in asserting that Reincarnation is contrary to them. God is great enough to tower above all the science and philosophy that man can formulate, and we do not fear that by using our wits we shall ever dethrone him or expose his secrets. What if Reincarnation should cast down some few tribal gods or

graven images of the human fancy; will that affect the majesty of the All-Father?

Our present life is neither a beginning nor an end, but a middle. All analogy helps us to this conclusion. There is a strict analogy between a day of our life and an incarnation. A day is incomplete, but causes set in motion one day and unfulfilled then may be fulfilled another day; and what we have begun before may be finished, and what we have not finished may be completed another day. Days are separated from each other by intervals during which we are in a different state of consciousness, the bodily life ebbs, and the mind passes to spheres of which we have little or no recollection when we awake, but throughout which the identity is preserved. The sleep refreshes the indwelling spirit and gives it new strength to take up its task of using the body and faculties. Have not writers of all times and places compared death to sleep? And let us remark in passing, that as sleep is pleasant beyond compare, it is absurd to fear death, the greater sleep. Children may not like to

go to bed, and may be afraid of the dark; but they do not fear sleep or imagine that they will never wake up again.

All nature is built on a plan of ebb and flow. As day succeeds day, with intervening nights, so season succeeds season, and the trees die and blossom again. The tides ebb and flow; the moon waxes and wanes. There is not a corner of the earth into which we may look and not find these successive alternations. The life of man, as imagined by conventional belief, exhibits a glaring contrast with all its surroundings, and stands out as the monumental instance of fatuity and incapacity on the part of the caricature of a deity who is so irreverently supposed to have designed it. No truly scientific brain could look at a single earth-life and not pronounce with certainty that it is but a fragment of a whole; so unmistakably are the missing parts forthshadowed in the part that is seen.

One step toward the belief in Reincarnation is the belief in the pre-existence of the Soul before birth. It has always been difficult in

the minds of reasonable people to reconcile themselves with the notion that a Soul can be immortal at one end only. A line infinite in one direction but terminated in the other direction is *a line with one end*—a geometrical conception calculated to make Euclid turn in his sarcophagus! To be immortal the Soul must have pre-existed. This conviction of pre-existence, both as a sentiment and an inference, is very common among our great writers. But with any other theory than Reincarnation, the idea of pre-existence becomes as difficult to understand as the idea of post-existence; especially in its relation with our present earth-life. If the Soul were never on earth before, and is not to be on earth again, our earth-life becomes reduced to an episode as brief as it is utterly purposeless.

III

SUPPOSED OBJECTIONS TO REINCARNATION

THE most familiar of all the alleged objections to Reincarnation is one that occurs instantly to the most rudimentary intelligence; but people of maturer judgment realize that such an objection must surely have occurred to Theosophists before, and must therefore have an easy solution. It is the question, "Why do we not remember our past lives?" wherein is implied the conclusion that as we do not remember them, we did not have any past lives. The Theosophist will at once refuse to admit that the mere fact of not remembering a thing is proof that it never happened; and so the argument falls to the ground at once. We do not remember our past lives; therefore we either

may or may not have lived before. That is the whole argument, and very little it means.

But it is by no means correct to say that we do not remember our past lives. Memory is a complicated faculty, and there is more than one kind of memory. We retain no detailed or pictorial memory of the events of our past lives, it is true; but nevertheless we possess memory of another kind. This other kind of memory exists in the form of innate ideas, instincts, proclivities, intuitions, and the like; and every man comes into the world plentifully endowed with his own peculiar combination of these. These are the memories of past births, treasured in the back of the mind, deeply ingrained in the nature, though not presenting themselves to the pictorial memory as the result of definite events. And little is it to be wondered that we do not remember the details of our past lives; but the fault is surely our own and not anyone else's. For what attention have we ever given to the cultivation of memory? Do we not allow our minds to remain in a state of loose control,

the ideas and impressions coming and going much as they please? Memory is a faculty that needs cultivation; those who have tried it know that the faculty can be cultivated to the most extraordinary degree and in fact without limit. But, as it is, we do not even remember things that happened in this life. How shall we then remember the things that happened centuries ago, and that in another body with another brain, and separated from our present life by the chasm of bodily death? Certainly it is not impossible that a man should be able to recall his past lives; but obviously he must first have learned how to sound the depths of his mind to regions beyond those to which ordinary thought extends; for the record of that past inheres, not in the cells of the present brain nor in any part of the mind which the man recognizes as forming part of his present personality, but in strata of the interior nature which lie deeper; in the consciousness of the reincarnating Ego, which alone endures throughout the chain of lives. To bring back that memory, then, we

should need to have gained a knowledge and mastery over our faculties such as no ordinary man can boast; we should need to have attained to freedom from the delusions which selfishness and desire engender in the mind, and to have curbed and bridled that froward steed, the mind, so that at will we could direct its operations. Such knowledge and power comes to one only after perfection in the study of Râja Yoga, self-mastery.

But a question will arise as to the *justice* and *expediency* of this dispensation by virtue of which we forget our past. The answer to this is simply that it would not be of service for a man to remember his past. We have as much — nay, more, in the experiences of one life, than we can readily assimilate; often we are almost overwhelmed even by that. If we had in addition the memory of countless past experiences, the confusion and the burden would be more than we could bear. Usually a man can make better headway by letting bygones be bygones and concentrating his efforts on the present duty; his reflections

hinder him very much. How often do we, in this life, wish we could wipe out the past and begin again!

It is argued that it is unjust to punish a man for acts which were virtually committed by someone else; but we should remember that whatever theory of life we may hold, the same question arises. If we believe in the ordinary theories of heredity, then we suffer for our ancestors' sins. If Reincarnation is unjust in this respect, it is at least less unjust than any other explanation. Then again, as said before, the life is the Soul's, and the real Man is conscious throughout; and it rests with ourselves how far we will succeed in attaining to the knowledge of the Soul or how long we will remain in ignorance. It might also be shown that we so habitually suffer through the faults of others that a special case of vicarious suffering would be of no account; or that our personality is so constantly changing that the man who suffers is never quite the same man as he who sinned. Again, we must not forget that recompense consists

of reward as well as of penalty; and that we are not apt to be so particular as to the justice of our rewards! In short it is evident that the question only requires a little solid thought, and many solutions will occur. The forgetfulness of past lives is both fortunate and equitable—for natures still wandering in the halls of illusion. Recollection and full knowledge are attainable—*when we are worthy and fitted for them and able to take them.*

The cases in which very young children evince a memory of having lived before are very numerous; but they are usually discredited by parents and the child is snubbed. He soon learns to dismiss these pictures and the strong light of his present life blots them out. But among Theosophists, who are ready to recognize such manifestations, the cases of memory in children are by no means rare.

It is only natural that considering the vanity and weakness of humanity, there should occasionally be found persons who claim to know who they were in their past lives. The characters chosen by them are of course the great

figures of history, such as Napoleon, and Mary Queen of Scots; but there are too many competing candidates for the same characters. Vanity is the greatest foe of genuine attainment; and anyone sufficiently advanced to have a genuine knowledge would certainly not air it in this way. There are many ways in which the mind can become so imbued with the character of someone else — such as by reading about him or enacting him on the stage — and the mere fact of having such an experience does not prove that it is a recollection. If the picture of our past life should come before us, we would have but poor means of recognizing it as such, of knowing whether it was our own past or someone else's, or whether it was a mere dream, or the glimpse of pictures in the records of the astral light. The possibilities of deception are almost infinite for one *not specially trained*.

Another class of objection is as follows: "I am sure I do not want to come back to this earth again; one life is enough for me." This is very shallow; the same person per-

haps, in other moments, repines over the shortness of life and shudders at the idea of being cut off in the midst of its enjoyments. Such ejaculations are not the results of serious reflection; they are the utterances of passing moods. The weary toiler feels, as he goes to rest at night, that he could never face another day. The sea-sick passenger vows he will never undertake another voyage. The petulant child does not want to go to school. Despondent moods may last a minute, a day, a year, several years; but they are temporary. What does it take to heal them? A night's rest, a holiday, a little flattery, a cup of tea—and lo! life is a glorious thing, a heroic battle, a song of joy. Who then can estimate the recuperative effect of the greater sleep, when the Soul lays aside body, mind, and all its burdens, till it re-enters life with the freshness of the infant?

And as to heaven, what do we know about that? There is no ideal of heaven so perfect, reasonable, just and blissful as that of Devachan, the Soul's abode after death. No ideas

of harps, not even the most glowing imaginations of the most refined religious minds, can approach the reality of that bliss. And eternity? A century would outrun most of our ideas of eternity. Eternity is a mere word. People who find the teachings of Theosophy too big for them have no business to be talking about eternity. People who get tired of one earth-life would soon tire of eternity; a modified eternity, consisting of a long while with another long while added to it, would probably suffice.

The idea of Reincarnation may excite reluctance in the hearts of those endeared to the Christian ideas of eternal bliss. But we assure them that this is only due to an inadequate conception of the doctrine of Reincarnation. A flippant way of dealing with the subject may blind our eyes to its real import and meaning; but serious reflection will convince us that there is enough in it to satisfy the most ardent aspirations and the most reverent heart.

We must refer the reader to the Manual on *Kâmaloka and Devachan* for further descrip-

tion of this state of bliss, simply remarking here that as described by H. P. Blavatsky, it exceeds the most ideal states conceived of by Christian thought. We are better off in the hands of the eternal Law than we should be if left to the fulfilment of our own hopes and notions of bliss after death.

And as to the other state — eternal punishment — it is surely unnecessary to dwell on the hideousness of that doctrine. It is entirely done away with in Theosophy, which regards the life on earth as quite sufficient tribulation for the Soul, and can picture no worse state after death. We simply give the following quotations from H. P. Blavatsky.

The only state the Spiritual Self knows of hereafter is that of unalloyed bliss. . . . We believe in no hell or paradise as localities; in no objective hell-fires and worms that never die, nor in any Jerusalem with streets paved with sapphires and diamonds. . . . We believe in an immutable law of absolute Love, Justice, and Mercy. . . . The same unerringly wise and just, rather than merciful, Law which inflicts upon the incarnated Ego the karmic punishment for every sin committed during the preceding

life on earth, has provided for the now disembodied Entity a long lease of mental rest, and the entire oblivion of every sad event, aye, to the smallest painful thought that took place in its last life as a personality, leaving in the soul-memory nothing but the reminiscences of that which was bliss or which led to happiness.—*The Key to Theosophy*, chap. viii.

As to the ordinary mortal, his bliss in Devachan is complete. It is an *absolute* oblivion of all that gave it pain or sorrow in the past incarnation, and even oblivion of the fact that such things as pain and sorrow exist at all. The *Devachani* lives its intermediate cycle between two incarnations surrounded by everything it had aspired to in vain, and in the companionship of everyone it loved on earth. It has reached the fulfilment of all its soul-yearnings. And thus it lives throughout long centuries an existence of *unalloyed* happiness, which is the reward for its sufferings in earth-life. In short, it bathes in a sea of uninterrupted felicity spanned only by events of still greater felicity in degree.—*The Key to Theosophy*, chap. ix.

In other passages, which we have not space to quote, H. P. Blavatsky speaks of the conditions of man after death as eminently merciful and consoling besides being absolutely just; and speaks in strong condemnation of the

terrible doctrines professed by some who call themselves followers of Christ, according to which the pains of this life are succeeded by even worse sufferings for endless time, or at best by a wholly inadequate and little coveted reward in "heaven." The fact is that the Law treats us a very great deal better than we treat ourselves, and the decrees of Eternal Justice are infinitely wiser and kinder than those which we so falsely attribute to It.

Centuries of mental servitude and spiritual blindness under the rule of bigotry and superstition, followed by a reaction to an equally superstitious extreme of scientific scepticism, have deprived the human breast of that joy of life, that trust in eternal justice, that feeling of dignity, which are the proper attributes of a divinely inspired being such as Man is. We have acquired an altogether flippant and disparaging way of regarding teachings, which is little wonder when one considers the kind of teachings we have been fed on. Of our own religious teachings as to heaven and hell we are accustomed to make fun. We talk

about the soul and its future in an airy way, when we have not the faintest conception of what is meant by any other condition of existence than our familiar daily one. Our notions as to what Deity is preparing for us in the next life are for the most part childish and petty to a degree that insults both ourselves and Deity. The idea that there can be anything in the teachings of Reincarnation to call for flippant treatment is equally regrettable. Deprived by death of our foolish delusions, we shall stand forth in our awful dignity as Souls; and no conceptions which mortal words can paint will suffice to give an idea of the bliss and holiness of that state.

IV

REINCARNATION AND HEREDITY

IT is sometimes said that our being born with ready-formed characters should not be counted as an argument for Reincarnation, because (so it is said) heredity explains that fact. But the word "heredity," as oftenest used, means simply "the fact that we inherit"; that is, it is only a statement of certain phenomena, not an explanation of them. If the word is ever used, in addition to this usage, to denote some cause or agent which may be presumed to occasion or determine the phenomena, such meaning should be most carefully distinguished from the former meaning. This distinction, however, is one that is frequently ignored, not only in this case but in many others; as, for instance, where the process of gravitation is confused with the cause of gravitation, or the phenomena of vitality

with the vital principle itself. Hence, in dealing with the present question, we are dealing with a particular case of a common fallacy, the fallacy of confounding the effect with the cause, or of supposing that a concise and generalized statement of certain phenomena is equivalent to an explanation of their cause. Students of Theosophy, however, must be prepared to give up to some extent the crude and careless modes of thought tolerated among those who are in truth but the camp-followers of science, all untrained as they are in those pursuits by which the faculties of a clear and well-kept mind are brought to bear on the wide range of questions which interest educated people.

Such dabblers, knowing nothing of abstract thought and unable to reason clearly, have found a field in which they can distinguish themselves among others of their kind by a show of cleverness that demands (as they flatter themselves) no knowledge of the laws of formal logic; and they commit blunders from which a lesson or two in Jevons' *Ele-*

mentary Logic might, had they ever heard of it, have saved them.

We will not, then, waste any more time in discussing the question whether a concise and generalized statement of the facts of heredity is or is not an explanation of their cause. Assuming for the present that it is not, we shall proceed to the further question whether science does know of anything, under the name of heredity or under any other name, that can rank as a possible cause or determinant of the phenomena of heredity. And in the first place we remark that science is forced, by its declared materialistic position, to seek its causes in the same place as it finds its effects, that is on the plane of physical matter. This circumstance alone would settle the question in the negative for a Theosophist, who holds that the causes of material phenomena are not themselves material. Scientists, however, ingeniously evade the difficulty by loading the whole burden of causation upon the shoulders of *something* which is at once ideal enough to serve as a cause and material enough to "save

their (materialistic) face" — something which they have conceived in the matrix of the "scientific imagination," and which, like a dutiful offspring, will obey all the laws imposed upon it by the heredity of its parents — a *provisional hypothesis*, in short, put in like a scaffolding to hold up the facts while something more permanent is being sought. This something is of course our old friend the ATOM, sometimes however in this case dressed up anew as the GERM-PLASM or the CELL. The parent transmits to his offspring a Cell, an Atom, or a Germ-plasm. Whether or not there has been discovered anything, which in the case of parents with several children, determines the allotment of the cells, which cell to which child, we do not know; but we do not much care whether this endless chain of physical causes contains one link or a hundred so long as it fails to lead anywhere.

To dismiss the matter, it is clear that the cell or any other materialistic hypothesis is but a subterfuge for the truth, and that the real causes must be sought, postpone the

search how we may, in realms beyond the physical. That is to say, that the more scientific explanations are true, the more they need the Theosophical explanation to explain them; and we can only be grateful to scientists if they succeed in filling in any of the gaps between cause and effect, and will please refrain from denying the existence of things which according to their own admission, belong to other departments; and from seeking for things, which they are not looking for, in a world where they do not expect to find them.

It is the Will of the Ego, conditioned by the requirements of Eternal Law and by the necessities created in past lives, that directs the incarnating Soul to the parentage best adapted to those requirements. It is this Will which determines to what extent the Soul shall modify its instrument or be modified by it. Cells, matrix, seed and all are instruments in the hands of the Being that is using them; and while science is studying the process and trying to believe that it works itself, Theosophists are studying the operator.

If a final word is necessary, it is to assure the genuine votaries of Science — those who sincerely and candidly follow the avowed principles of their noble cult — that the above strictures are intended for such only as the cap happens to fit; and we are sure they, the genuine votaries, will welcome anything that tends to relieve them from the burden of a disparaging association with those who purvey fraudulent imitations of their goods. We can sympathize with them.

V

REINCARNATION IN ANTIQUITY

REINCARNATION has been well called the favorite belief of mankind, inasmuch as it has always been, and now is, the belief of the majority. Later events and discoveries, it may here be remarked, have taught us to pay more regard to the abilities both of the ancients and of the modern Orientals than we were formerly wont to do; and we may therefore estimate their opinion as worthy of consideration. It is in fact only in later times and in Western lands that the belief in — or rather the knowledge of — Reincarnation has waned; and even this waning is but a temporary phase marking a decline of spirituality and a wave of materialism.

Hindûism and Buddhism are of course known to be inspired throughout by the teaching of Reincarnation, and it is neither

necessary nor practicable to digress into quotations from these sources. But once again the student is reminded not to misunderstand the symbolism which is often used, nor to adopt the misunderstandings of the ignorant for whom religion is always a superstition. The use of animal symbols to denote various rôles or conditions of the soul is very common. We do not believe that Buddha died through a surfeit of pork, though he is said to have died from eating too much "hog's flesh"; nor do we imagine that Jesus was ever a lamb or a vine. In the same way, when it is said that a rapacious man will become a tiger, or a gluttonous one a pig, nothing more is meant than that in his next (human) birth he will be afflicted with the corresponding propensities. There was also a teaching that after a man had died and his Soul passed to Devachan, the elements that entered into his *kâma-rûpa* or "animal soul" would, after their disintegration, enter into the structure of animals. But this is no more than saying that the particles of our

body will afford food to the worms, and is no more warrant for a belief in animal transmigration than the fact about the worms is warrant for a belief that we shall be worms in our next life. Whether or not there are any grossly ignorant and superstitious coolies who believe such doctrines does not concern the beliefs of the intelligent, whether in the East or the West.

In ancient Egypt Reincarnation was taught, but to the multitude it was not fully given out; this accounts for the misunderstandings of those archaeologists who have mistaken the exoteric for the esoteric teachings. Here again we find also the symbolical teachings as to the destiny of the various principles of man after disintegration; for the Egyptians recognized seven principles as do the Theosophists. These teachings must not be confused with the doctrine of Reincarnation as applied to the case of the immortal Soul. The latter doctrine was fully understood, but the doctrine was taught only in the Sacred Schools and given to the multitude in veiled language.

The Egyptians communicated some of their knowledge to the Greeks, and certain great Greek philosophers were initiated by the Egyptian priests. Plato's *Phaedrus* is a description of the career of the immortal part of man and its relation to its earthly tenelements, couched in Greek modes of expression. The Neo-Platonists of Alexandria also taught Reincarnation. Plotinus says:

The soul, though of divine origin, and proceeding from the regions on high, becomes merged in the dark receptacle of the body, and being naturally a posterior god, it descends hither through a certain voluntary inclination, for the sake of power and of adorning inferior concerns. By this means it receives a knowledge of its latent powers, and exhibits a variety of operations peculiar to its nature, which by perpetually abiding in an incorporeal habit, and never proceeding into energy, would have been bestowed in vain. . . . Through an abundance of desire the soul becomes profoundly merged into matter, and no longer totally abides with the universal soul. Yet our souls are able alternately to rise from hence, carrying back with them an experience of what they have known and suffered in their fallen state; and whence they will learn how

blessed it is to abide in the intelligible world, and by a comparison, as it were, of contraries, will more plainly perceive the excellence of a superior state. For the experience of evil produces a clearer knowledge of good. This is accomplished in our souls according to the circulations of time, in which a conversion takes place from subordinate to more exalted natures.

In the early days of the Christian era there were Schools which sought to preserve the ancient *Gnosis* and the teachings of the Sacred Mysteries throughout the rising tide of materialism and corruption. The Gnostics and the Essenes were two of these Schools. They admittedly had esoteric teachings for the initiated and exoteric teachings for the multitude. Many of the Church Fathers taught Reincarnation as a doctrine of Christianity; and it continued to be an essential part of Christian philosophy until the growth of Western influences caused it to be expunged from the canon. Justin Martyr speaks of the soul inhabiting more than one human body; but also says that very evil souls are punished by being incarnated in beasts.

Origen advocated the teaching most strongly. He says:

If our course be not marked out according to our works before this life, how is it true that it is not unjust in God that the elder should serve the younger and be hated, before he had done things deserving of servitude and of hatred?

Many other writers of the early Church also held views favorable to Reincarnation; but at the Council of Constantinople, in the year 551, the teaching was condemned and removed from the canon of the Church. Needless to point out, a teaching which upholds man's divinity and responsibility was a thorn in the side of those influences which sought to establish a system of ecclesiastical jurisdiction based on the priestly office of intercession, and on the doctrine of original sin removable by vicarious atonement.

If we ask why modern Christianity does not teach Reincarnation, the answer is that modern Christianity has been specially edited so as not to teach it. The books constituting the Bible are a selection; some of those re-

jected as "apocryphal" teach Reincarnation, e. g., the "Book of Wisdom." St. Augustine says:

The very thing which is now called the "Christian" religion really was known to the ancients, nor was it wanting at any time from the beginnings of the human race up to the time Christ came in the flesh; from which time the true religion, which had previously existed, began to be called Christian, and this in our days is the Christian religion, not as having been wanting in former times, but as having in later times received that name.—(*Opera*, I, 12)

The esoteric teachings of Christ—those which he gave to his disciples—have not come down to us. If ever recorded they were suppressed and afterwards lost. We have only a few of the parables and ethical teachings which he gave to the multitude;*

* There are however not a few passages in the *Logia* of Jesus which point clearly to the real esoteric teachings. For instance:

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth for ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.—*John*, viii. 32-36.

and to these have been added gleanings from Paganism, Neo-Platonism, etc., and a pile of dogmas accumulated by the ecclesiasticism of subsequent centuries. But we have no philosophical teachings as the Oriental religions have. Hence Reincarnation is not specially taught in modern Christianity. It is this fact which, among others of a similar nature, explains why modern Christianity is so powerless in the face of present-day human problems, and why it derives strength from the natural intuition of the human heart, rather than gives strength.

VI

REINCARNATION THE MASTER-KEY FOR MODERN PROBLEMS

IT is impossible to over-estimate the effect which a belief in Reincarnation is destined to produce in modern thought. We have the inner conviction of our immortality and solidarity, but our reason, instead of reinforcing this conviction, contradicts it, because that reason has been fed on such false teachings. If, on the contrary, the reason were to confirm and explain the inner voice, our faculties would combine towards the same end instead of neutralizing each other.

The vague profession of a belief in immortality is a very different thing from a conviction of it, and there are all degrees and stages between the two. The teachings of Theosophy can turn our professed beliefs

into convictions strong enough to affect our ideas and conduct; and the process is one of gradual growth. Students of Theosophy, who have sought to make its teachings the guiding rules of their daily lives, gradually acquire a new way of regarding life which affects all their views and actions. A sense of the plenitude of time grows up in them and enables them to act as beings with an eternal past stretching behind them and an eternal future before. The feeling that every effort counts and that it is never too late to begin an enterprise inspires them with a new energy. Most important of all, the sentiment of hope is revived; for, while the anthology of our modern literature breathes throughout a note of despair at untimely death, faded hopes ("never to return — alas!"), and unrealized aspirations, the Theosophist knows that all ebbings are but temporary and must be followed by renewed flows. To him death is but an episode; the fading of youthful enthusiasms is a temporary process due to physical conditions. Inspired with this conviction,

he ceases more and more to be dominated by these passing conditions, and preserves eternal hope in his spirit if he cannot as yet do it in his lower principles.

When we think of the note of despair that is filling the world in consequence of lack of knowledge, we begin to realize what a knowledge of Reincarnation with its assurance of immortality may mean. The rush for wealth and luxury, the hurry and impatience of life, are founded on our pessimistic beliefs. If a man asks himself, as all must do sometimes, "What am I here for, and what is the object of life?" the only answers he can make are, first, to shelve the question — banish it to the back of the mind — or to try to feed his hopes and ambitions on the prospect of the theological heaven — a prospect which appeals rather to the wish for consolation and release from effort than to the noble aspiration for more service, greater victories. In both cases the answers are emasculating and calculated to narcotize the human spirit. But Reincarnation holds out the prospect — a prospect which

becomes ever more certain and sure as we grow in knowledge — of renewed youth and joy, fresh opportunities, continued loving service among fellow-hearts, victory upon victory won over the frailties of human nature, and a limitless vista of Life and realization in spheres of consciousness so vast and full that we can not form the faintest conception of them. This is truly a conception calculated to give back to humanity its forgotten vigor and banish all that feebleness and vacillation of thought so characteristic of it at present. When we have again this world-old knowledge we may regain the paradise we have lost and discover what lost elixir quickened the nerves of the mighty men of old and endowed them with such godlike vigor.

Age is but a condition of the body (and even the stiffness of age is not inevitable; in true health it would be unknown); the Soul never grows old, and the more we make its Life our own, the more do we succeed in keeping eternally young and fresh. Death is a sleep in a sense truer than the poets

knew ; for it is attended by a fresh awakening and renewed vigor. The loves of youth, which we so vainly regret, will be born again — but next time more purified from the cloying element of passion. The delusions die — and well it is so — but the seed remains and next time we will love more truly and less personally.

And the death of those we love? What a terrible thing for those who do not believe in immortality! What doubtful consolation for those who have only the uncertain beliefs of theology! But Theosophists feel that the real Man still lives; and that all that was best and most lovable in him dwells eternally in the realms of Soul, where there is true communion and perfect understanding. Freed from the afflictions of mortal life, that loved Soul feels those It loves, helping them interiorly in their own struggles.*

* This has nothing to do with "Spiritualism." Theosophy expressly teaches that the Ego in Devachan can never appear to people on earth except under the most exceptional conditions, such as would

If Reincarnation helps us in prospect, it can help us equally in retrospect. For it is no small inspiration to look back and feel that we are somebody; that our mortal clay conceals an eternal Soul vested with knowledge and power; that we are on a pilgrimage of our own choosing — masters of our destiny, not pieces of driftwood. The great purposes of Nature and Deity are our own purposes; we will them. It is only the wayward personal desires that cause us temporary aberrations from the Path we are treading. It helps us to “will our destiny,” to make our will identical with the Universal Will.

There is no problem, among the many vexed ones of life, which Reincarnation will not clear up. It is a perfect master-key. And

require the presence of a real Teacher and could never occur in a séance-room. What appears or communicates in a séance-room is only a phantasm created partly of the astral substance of medium and sitters and partly (in many cases) of the *kâmarûpa* or “spook” of deceased persons, which is a wholly irresponsible and unmoral or immoral entity. On the dangers and delusions of Spiritualism see other Manuals.

it is no new invention, but a bringing of our philosophy into line with our secret intuitions of the Truth. It is in fact a revelation; and as all real revelations must, it carries conviction with it, demonstrating itself by its own obvious verity. May this key of the ancient Mysteries unlock many a door that bars the way of human progress!

VII

REINCARNATION IN MODERN LITERATURE

THE works of the poets and other writers show that the truth has always been felt in the heart, though hindered in expression by the overlying mass of mental disabilities and prejudices. The Higher Mind in man, whose seat is in the Heart, *knows and sees*; but it needs the help of the lower intellectual functions to interpret its knowledge into terms which can be expressed in language. When these intellectual functions instead of interpreting, throw up clouds of doubt and obscurity, the result is not a teaching but a poetical aspiration or a pious conjecture. But it speaks well for the truth of a teaching that it should have survived in this intuitive form through so much discouragement. It should be noted that the writers have used,

for want of a better word, the term "Metempsychosis"; but they do not mean animal transmigration.



SELECTIONS FROM POETRY AND PROSE

EDWIN ARNOLD

Nay, but as when one layeth
His worn-out robes away,
And, taking new ones, sayeth,
"These will I wear today!"
So putteth by the spirit
Lightly its garb of flesh,
And passeth to inherit
A residence afresh.—*Song Celestial*



JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

A presence strange at once and known
Walked with me as my guide,
The skirts of some forgotten life
Trailed noiseless at my side.

Was it a dim-remembered dream
Or glimpse through aeons old?
The secret which the mountains kept
The river never told.—*A Mystery*

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE

A prescient lore
Springs from some life outlived of yore.
O swift instructive startling gleams
Of deep soul-knowledge; not as dreams
For aye ye vaguely dawn and die,
But oft with lightning certainty
Pierce through the dark oblivious brain
To make old thoughts and memories plain;
Thoughts which perchance must travel back
Across the wild bewildering track
Of countless aeons.



BAYARD TAYLOR

All outward vision yields to that within
Whereof nor creed nor canon holds the key;
We only feel that we have ever been
And evermore shall be.

The poet came to the land of the East
When spring was in the air,
The East was dressed for a wedding feast
So young she seemed and fair,
And the poet knew the land of the East,
His soul was native there.

All things to him were the visible forms
Of early and precious dreams,
Familiar visions that mocked his quest
Beside the western streams,
Or gleamed in the gold of the clouds unrolled
In the sunset's dying beams.



WALT WHITMAN

Facing West from California's shores,
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of
maternity, the land of migrations, look afar,
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle
almost circled:
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the
vales of Kashmere,
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage,
and the hero,
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and
the spice islands,
Long having wandered since, round the earth hav-
ing wandered,
Now I face home again, very pleased and joyous.

As to you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings of
many deaths.
No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times
before.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Sometimes a breath floats by me,
And odor from Dreamland sent,
Which makes the ghost seem nigh me
Of a something that came and went,
Of a life lived somewhere, I know not
In what diviner sphere;
Of mem'ries that come and go not;
Like music once heard by an ear
That cannot forget or reclaim it;
A something so shy it would shame it
To make it a show.
A something too vague, could I name it,
For others to know:
As though I had lived it and dreamed it,
As though I had acted and schemed it
Long ago.



WADDINGTON

Where wert thou, Soul, ere yet my body born
Became thy dwelling place? Didst thou on earth
Or in the clouds, await this body's birth,
Or by what chance upon that winter's morn
Didst thou this body find, a babe forlorn?
Didst thou in sorrow enter, or in mirth,
Or for a jest perchance, to try its worth
Thou tookest flesh, ne'er from it to be torn?

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

I have been here before,
But when or how I cannot tell;
I know the grass beyond the door,
The sweet keen smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.



DAVID HUME

The soul, if immortal, existed before our birth.
What is incorruptible must be ungenerable.
Metempsychosis [reincarnation] is the only system
of immortality that Philosophy can hearken to.



WORDSWORTH

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath elsewhere had its setting,
And cometh from afar.



PROFESSOR WILLIAM KNIGHT

If we could legitimately determine any question
of belief by the number of its adherents, the *quod
semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* would apply
to metempsychosis [reincarnation] more fitly than to

any other. I think it is quite as likely to be revived and to come to the front again as any rival theory.



PROFESSOR FRANCIS BOWEN

The doctrine of metempsychosis [reincarnation] may almost claim to be a natural or innate belief in the human mind, if we may judge from its wide diffusion among the nations of the earth and its prevalence throughout the historical ages.



GEORGE MACDONALD

We cannot yet have learned all that we are meant to learn through the body. How much of the teaching, even of this world, can the most diligent and most favored man have exhausted before he is called to leave it? Is all that remains lost?



EDWARD YOUNG

Look nature through; 'tis revolution all,
All change, no death. Day follows night, and night
The dying day; stars rise and set, and set and rise.
Earth takes the example. All to re-flourish fades
As in a wheel: all sinks to reascend;
Emblems of man who passes, not expires.

WILLIAM SHARP

None sees the slow and upward sweep
By which the soul from life-depths deep
Ascends, — unless, mayhap, when free,
With each new death we backward see
The long perspective of our race
Our multitudinous past lives trace.



ALFRED TENNYSON

Yet how should I for certain hold,
Because my memory is so cold,
That I first was in human mold?

.
It may be that no life is found,
Which only to one engine bound
Falls off, but cycles always round.

As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping thro' from state to state.

.
But, if I lapsed from nobler place,
Some legend of a fallen race
Alone might hint of my disgrace;

.
Or if thro' lower lives I came —
Tho' all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame —

I might forget my weaker lot;
For is not our first year forgot?
The haunts of memory echo not.

.
Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams —

Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare.

—*The Two Voices*

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Established for the benefit of the people of the earth & all creatures

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* * *

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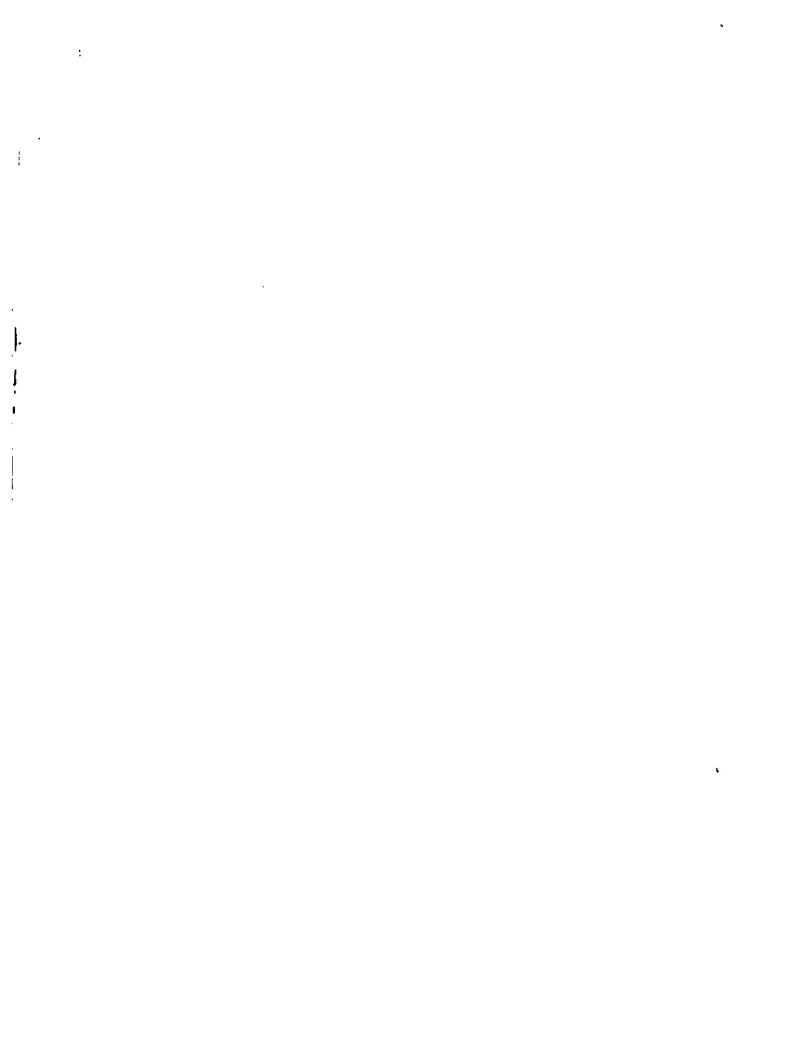
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